DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 110 157 24 PS 007 910

AUTHOR Austin, Gilbert R.; Dittman, Laura
TITLE Early Childhood Education in Scandinavia.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Early Childhood Education, Urbana, Ill.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE May 75
NOTE 20p.
AVAILABLE FROM Publications Office/I.C.B.D., College of Education, University of Illinois, 805 W. Pennsylvania Ave., Urbana, Illinois 61801 (Catalog No. 130, $1.00)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Birth Rate; *Cross Cultural Studies; *Early Childhood Education; Employment Trends; *Equal Education; *National Surveys; Occupational Surveys; *Preschool Programs; Working Women
IDENTIFIERS *Scandinavia

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the move toward greater equality of educational opportunity in Scandinavia with particular emphasis on early childhood education. The increasing demand for preschool education in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden is related to low birth rates together with increased employment of women and the general demand for equality of educational opportunity. Descriptive summaries of pre-primary education in each of the 4 countries show that preschool programs in Scandinavia are, in response to changing demographic variables, in the process of rapid development and change. The programs offered tend to emphasize a rich play experience, provision of varied non-structured material, linguistic skills, and social and emotional development. (GO)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED110157

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN SCANDINAVIA

by

Gilbert R. Austin and Laura Dittman
University of Maryland

Available from:
Publications Office/IREC
College of Education/University of Illinois
805 West Pennsylvania Avenue
Urbana, Illinois 61801

Price: $1.00 Catalog: #130

May 1975

PS 007910

The material in this publication was prepared pursuant to a contract with the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Contractors undertaking such projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgement in professional and technical matters. Prior to publication, the manuscript was submitted to the Area Committee for Early Childhood Education at the University of Illinois for critical review and determination of professional competence. This publication has met such standards. Points of view or opinions, however, do not necessarily represent the official view or opinions of either the Area Committee or the National Institute of Education.

3003

ABSTRACT

This article reviews the traditional points of view held about education in Europe in general and discusses the move toward greater equality of educational opportunity in Scandinavia. Particular emphasis is given to the thinking of the Scandinavians about early childhood education. The recent heavy demand for preschool education in the four countries studied (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden) is related to the changing structure and size of families and the changing life styles of women as well as to the conviction that preschool education can have an important impact on creating greater equality of educational opportunity. At all levels, including preschool, the Scandinavians are attempting to meet the needs of all children by individualizing instruction. The preschool period is judged to be an important time for stressing social and emotional growth.

ED 104

Early Childhood Education in Scandinavia

The traditional system of European education functioned to sort out the young in such away that the children of the upper and middle classes received the best schooling available with much greater frequency than the children of the lower class. In this way, the school system in Europe acted not just as a place to educate children but also as a place to restrict access to privileged positions. The Western European educational system made a distinction, sometimes explicit, always implicit, between the functions of the two levels of education: pre-primary and primary, and post-primary. The post-primary existed not simply to pass on the culture, but to train the future governors, executives and teachers of the society. The pre-primary and primary school system existed for another category of students, by far the majority. Its purpose was to instill in them the basic knowledge and attitudes required to maintain a secular system of liberal government. Whatever the conscious views of its supporters may have been, traditional continental education rested on special circumstances of middle class society in the 19th and early 20th centuries, many of which no longer exist today.

Since the end of World War II and particularly since the early 1960's, most European educational systems have been fighting against the philosophy of the elitist and class-oriented school system. The four Scandinavian countries -- Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden -- have in many ways been in the forefront of the fight. They generally have been committed to educational reform as one part of a total reform which sought to grant to all a new level of opportunity and to reaffirm the

dignity of man. In Sweden for example, it was stated:

> The Swedish approach to educational reform can only be understood in the light of a solid political consensus. All the main political parties now accept the objectives of the comprehensive school which are, in effect, the objectives of Swedish education. This is not to say that there is no controversy, nor that earlier decisions were easy to reach. But what stands out as abundantly clear is that the reform has its origin in bold decisions taken on political and social ground and that the commitment to social equality and mass education which these decisions entailed has now become part of the Swedish way of life -- no longer a matter of acrimonious debate, but rather part of the political climate. (MacLure, 1971)

The Norwegian position is similar, but deals more specifically with educational innovation and changes which have taken place:

> Presumably, the common denominator in the extensive reforms undertaken is democratization, the desire to attain a socially equal educational system in which each individual student is given the optimum opportunity for growth.
>
> The objective of equal opportunity for all in education has profound consequences. To attain this goal, not only external structural measures, but also changes in the nature of opportunity iteself are necessary. This kind of change is only possible if a general positive attitude and political willingness for improvement exist. Another necessary pre-condition is that the situation favors research and experiment, with the real possibility that implementation of improvements in the educational system may result. (Dalin, 1971)

The search for equality explicit in these statements has had important implications in the provision of early childhood education and care to all sections of the society. Included now are the children of the Laps, the children in isolated rural fishing villages in Sweden, Norway and Finland and the children of caravan dwellers (i.e. gypsies) found in Denmark. Included also are children of the parents who, in the judgment of the Scandinavian society, do not provide a sufficiently rich environment for their children. There is a strong belief that early

28605

school intervention can make an important contribution toward helping these children to greater equality.

Preschool and Family Trends

Because formal education in Scandinavia does not start until age 6½ or 7, preschool programs include many 5- and 6-year-olds. Table I presents the number and percentage of children between ages 2 and 6 attending preschool in Scandinavian countries in 1970-71. As in the United States, there are both full-day and half-day programs in centers known as day nurseries, leisure centers, day care centers, nursery schools and play parks. In addition, there are many family day homes for which figures are not included in the following table:

Table I

*Population Attendance Rates in Scandinavia

1970-71

	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
Total Age Group 2 - 6 years old in Preschool **	70	22	12	131
Total Population Ages 2 - 6 ***	402	373	333	586
% of Age Group Enrolled	17.4	05.9	03.6	22.4

* In thousands

**Source: Denmark: Ministry of Social Security
Finland: Ministry of Education
Norway: Ministry of Family and Consumer Affairs
Sweden: Ministry of Social Welfare

***Source: United Nations Demographic Yearbook, 1970

Attendance (enrollment) varies greatly across these four countries; Sweden has the largest percent of children in centers. Even so, Sweden's figure is quite low compared to that of France or Belgium, where the proportion of children aged 2 to 6 enrolled in preschool is 70.4 and 79.6 respectively. The current belief in the United States is that full day care is readily available to all who request it in Scandinavian countries. Actually, more than half of the preschool children in the four Scandinavian countries are at home or in private family day care homes. Recent growth in preschool attendance has been large, however. In Sweden, for instance enrollments rose from 49,000 in 1960 to 131,000 in 1970, an increase of 167.3 percent. Parents register children at birth and the waiting lists are long.[1] Figures for this 10-year period were not available for the other three countries, but Denmark's growth appears similar to that of Sweden.

While the goal of greater equality for all children in the future has been officially stated, the search for greater equality by women has been an important factor affecting growth of preschools. Higher rates of female employment seem to coincide with the demand for places in preschool. Table II presents labor force participation rates for 1960-1970.

Table II shows that the rates of male employment have declined in all cases, while those for women, except for Finland, have risen. There is some relationship between employment of women and the preschool enrollments shown in Table I, again with the exception of Finland.

30603

Table II

Labor Force Participation Rates *

1960-1970

Denmark

Total Labor Force x 100
Population from 15 - 64 years

	1960	1970	Difference
Total	71.2	75.3	4.1
Males	99.5	92.3	-7.2
Females	43.5	58.3	14.8

Finland

Total Labor Force x 100
Population from 15 - 64 years

	1960	1970	Difference
Total	77.2	72.6	-5.6
Males	91.4	84.1	-7.3
Females	64.0	61.7	-2.3

Norway

Total Labor Force x 100
Population from 15 - 64 years

	1960	1970	Difference
Total	64.6	64.1	-0.5
Males	93.0	89.0	-4.0
Females	36.2	38.8	2.6

Sweden

Total Labor Force x 100
Population from 15 - 64 years

	1960	1970	Difference
Total	73.3	74.3	1.0
Males	93.1	88.8	-4.3
Females	53.3	59.4	6.1

*Labor Force Statistics, 1959-1970. Paris, 1972.

The younger families in Scandinavia, i.e., those married in the last 15 years, in general have few children. In Sweden, for instance, 40 percent of these families have only one child. Table III presents the live birth rates for the four countries from 1967-1971. Over this 5-year period the number of live births per thousand of the population has declined in all cases:

Table III

Live Births per 1,000 Population *

	1967	1971	Difference
Denmark	81,410	75,550	-5,860
	16.8	15.2	-1.6
Finland	77,289	61,164	-16,125
	16.6	13.2	-3.4
Norway	66,779	66,182	-597
	17.6	16.9	-0.7
Sweden	121,360	114,488	-6,872
	15.4	14.1	-1.3

*United Nations Demographic Yearbook, 1970.

It would seem contradictory that the demand for early childhood education should increase at the same time that family size decreased. The apparent explanation is that when a woman has only one or two children to care for, she can more readily be relieved of child care responsibilities for at least a portion of the working day. Low birth rates, together with the increased employment of women and the

general demand for equality for educational opportunity, are responsible for the increased demand for early childhood education.

The Preschool Program in Scandinavia

Many of the problems in preschool education in Scandinavia today sound familiar to U. S. readers. Specifically, these include the creation of sufficient places for children whose parents desire and need this service, the articulation and coordination of preschool with regular school, the grouping of children (family-style or age-segregated) and the involvement of parents in the policy making and implementation of preschool programs.

A brief review of pre-primary education as it presently exists in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden follows:

Pre-Primary Education in Denmark

> Bornehave (kindergarten). This term is applied to any day care institution devoted to early childhood education for children from 2½ to 7 years of age, when compulsory education begins. Many of the children spend the whole day at the centers because their mothers are working outside their homes. These centers are either private or municipal institutions under the administrative control of Ministry of Social Security.
>
> Bornehaveklasser (preschool classes), are voluntary and provided for children aged 5-7 years. The objective of such classes is to keep the children occupied in a pedagogical setting and to make them familiar with the daily routine of the school, while, on the other hand, teaching proper is deprecated. Preschool classes are under the control of the Ministry of Education; additionally, there are two other kinds of preschool provisions, Day Nurseries (vuggestuer) and premises of play (legesteder).[2]

Denmark probably has the world's best-developed set of play parks (legesteder). These are run on a municipal basis and provide a great variety of things for children to play with. The children are

under the supervision of well-trained aides, not professional teachers.

The kindergarten is characterized by a flexible daily routine, organized in indoor and outdoor play according to the weather conditions. Materials such as paint, clay, wood, textiles and paper are available as well as group singing, playing and dramatic play. Imagination and linguistic development are stimulated through reading stories to the children and encouraging conversation. Social development is considered important and the children learn cooperation and consideration for others. They become accustomed to normal school life and its routine of work and play.

Pre-Primary Education in Finland

> Responsibility for the supervision of lastentarhat barntradgardar (kindergartens) rests with the Ministry of Social Affairs. Kindergartens are operated by municipal governments or private organizations. Most of them charge no fees and are situated in towns and cities. The Ministry of Education has no responsibility in this field.[3]

The major educational concern in Finland today is how to expand and improve preschool facilities in every part of the country, for every child and for the whole family. The creation of preschool for children of six years (compulsory school starts at seven) and coordination with the primary schools are other important concerns.

The preschool programs are extremely varied. The teachers are not bound to follow either a fixed curriculum or a yearly plan. It is considered important to create an atmosphere of confidence and friendship and a spirit of happy companionship among the children. The curriculum consists of games, plays, excursions, handwork, and listening to fairy tales and stories.

Pre-Primary Education in Norway

> Preschool institutions (kindergartens) are situated mostly in built-up areas. They are, for the most part, managed by private organizations with or without financial assistance by local authorities. In some cases they are run by the local authorities themselves.
>
> There is no direct link between preschool institutions and the rest of the school system. Preschool institutions are regarded as having a social, rather than an educational, function and they come under the supervision of the Ministry of Family and Consumer Affairs.[4]

Kindergartens are supplemented by play-parks, which are subsidized by the municipalities and staffed by "park-aunts" who have a 6-week training course including knowledge of first aid. Each "aunt" has about 20 children in her charge, perhaps 30 if she has an assistant. This service is available all year except in extremely bad weather. There are shelters for protection from rain. Children bring their own lunches and milk.

Early childhood education is seen as a supplement to the family role of educating small children, and its purpose is to develop social competence, to stimulate linguistic and intellectual development and to detect social, physical or psychological disabilities which might respond to early intervention. Preschool institutions are regarded as having a social rather than an educational function.

Pre-Primary Education in Sweden

> Pre-primary education is a voluntary form of schooling. It is under the supervision of the Social Welfare Board, not under the Board of Education - an arrangement which reflects its present nature and function. Schools of this type are so far to be found mainly in the towns. They take children between the ages of one and six. The pre-primary school system is, however, rapidly expanding both in number, size and content.

> The question, whether these institutions should be linked as a voluntary form of schooling to the compulsory school, is being discussed among educators and politicians.[5]

Acting on the proposals made by a State Commission on Child Centres, the Swedish government presented in May 1973 a proposal to offer preschool to all 6-year-olds by 1975 under the authority of the National Board of Health and Welfare. Municipal authorities are directed to initiate expansion plans for attaining this goal over a 5-year period.

In addition, the bill proposes that a special effort be made to plan for children under six who are suffering from various handicapping conditions. It is noted that children who have physical, mental, social, linguistic or other handicaps are in special need of support and stimulation. Additionally, it is suggested that children in sparsely populated areas who lack peer contact be permitted to start preschool before age six.

The Commission also proposes the direction of the pedagogic program. The essential points are emphasis on ego development, communicative capacity, and the formation of a conceptual apparatus. Staff should be assigned to work in teams, with children placed in mixed age groups, or "sibling teams".

Summary

Preschool programs in Scandinavia are in the process of rapid development and change. A social commitment to equality of opportunity, coupled with increased demand for service by working women, has created a climate for expansion. As yet, however, places in preschool are not as readily available as many outside observers have believed.

The programs offered tend to emphasize a rich play experience, provision of varied non-structured materials, social and emotional development, and linguistic skills.

REFERENCE NOTES

1. Mueller, Jeanne. Preschool Education and Day Care for Swedish Children. Manuscript prepared for the Swedish Information Service. Supported in part by a grant from the U. S. Office of Child Development. 1971.

2. Council for Cultural Co-operation of the Council of Europe: Education in Europe: School Systems: A Guide, Strasbourg, 1970.

3. Education in Europe. ibid.

4. Education in Europe. ibid.

5. Education in Europe. ibid.

20616

REFERENCES

AUSTIN, G.; ANTONSSEN, C.: A Review of Pre-school Education Efforts in Four Countries, OECD, Stencil, Paris, France, 1971.

OHO, E., JURAMA, V.; NIKKI, K., TALONEN, S.; VILLBERG, P.: Esiluokan Opetussuunitelma Lukuvuonna 1967-68. (The curriculum project for the preschool grade in the term 1967-68) The office of school psychologists at Lahti. Report. Finland.

BLACKSTONE, T.: Preschool Education in Europe, Council of Europe, No. 13/1970, Stencil.

DALIN, P.: Innovation in Education: Norway. Center for Educational Research and Innovation, OECD, Paris, 1971.

HELMSTEDT, A.: Early Childhood and Preschool Education in Denmark. Royal Danish Ministry of Education, 1.8.1971. Stencil.

KARRBY, G.: Child Rearing and the Development of Moral Structure. Almqvist and Wiksell, Stockholm, Sweden, 1971.

MACLURE, S.: Innovation in Education: Sweden. Center for Educational Research and Innovation, OECD, Paris, 1971.

NUMMENMAA, T.; SYLVANEN, M., WECKROTH, J.: Lapson Leikki - JeLiikkumatila Kaupunkiymparistossa. (Children's Playground in Urban Environments.) 1970 Tampere University. Department of Psychology, Finland.

OINONEN, P.: Kouluvalmiuden Ognelma. Milloin Lapsi on Kypsa Kouluun. (The Problem of School Readiness. When is a Child Mature for School?). Porvoo-Helsinki, Finland.

SJOLUND, A.: "The Effect of Day Care Institutions on Children's Development", Socialforsknings - Institutes Publication nr. 38, Kopenhavn, Denmark, 1969.

STUKAT, K.G.: Lekskolans Inverkan Pa Barns Utvecklin. (Effects of kindergarten training on later development). Almqvist and Wiksell, Stockholm, Sweden, 1966.

TAKALA, A.: Ohjeita Lasten Tarkkailuun Lastentarhassa. (A Guide to Child Observation in Kindergarten). 1960. Jyvaskyla University. Department of Psychology. Report. Finland.

Care of Children and Young People. Social Conditions in Denmark. Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs, International Relations Division, Copenhagen, 1967.

Council for Cultural Co-operation of the Council of Europe: Education in Europe: School Systems: A Guide, Strasbourg, 1970.

Council of Europe: Committee for General and Technical Education. Preschool Education, Aims, Methods and Problems. Working document submitted by Norway, October 1971.

Day-Care Institutions in Norway. December 1970. Stencil

Labor Force Statistics, 1959-1970. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris, 1972.

School Administration, City of Oslo, Department for School Experimentation and Research: Financial Arrangement of Preschool Education in Norway, September, 1970, January 1970. Stencil.

SOU (1972:26) Forskolan 1 - 2, Betankande Avgivet Av 1968 Ars Barnstugeutredning. (Pre-school 1 - 2. Report by the 1968 Pre-school Commission). Stockholm, Sweden.

00013

Postscript

The Educational Resources Information Center/Early Childhood Education Clearinghouse (ERIC/ECE) is one of a system of 16 clearinghouses sponsored by the National Institute of Education to provide information about current research and developments in the field of education. The clearinghouses, each focusing on a specific area of education (such as early childhood, teacher education, language and linguistics) are located at universities throughout the United States.

The clearinghouses search systematically to acquire current, significant documents relevant to education. These research studies, speeches, conference proceedings, curriculum guides, and other publications are abstracted, indexed and published in Research in Education (RIE), a monthly journal. RIE is available at libraries, or may be ordered from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

Another ERIC publication is Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE), a monthly guide to periodical literature which cites articles in more than 560 journals and magazines in the field of education. Articles are indexed by subject, author, and journal contents. CIJE is available at libraries, or by subscription from Macmillan Information, 909 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10022.

The Early Childhood Education Clearinghouse (ERIC/ECE) distributes a quarterly newsletter ($2.00 - 4 issues) which reports on new programs and publications, and RIE documents of special interest. For a complete list of ERIC/ECE publications, or if you would like to subscribe to the Newsletter write: Publications Office/IREC, College of Education, University of Illinois, 805 West Pennsylvania Avenue, Urbana, Illinois 61801. All orders must be accompanied by check or money order, payable to the University of Illinois. Sorry, we cannot bill.

30619

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSES--CURRENT ADDRESSES

CAREER EDUCATION
204 Gurler
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Illinois 60115

COUNSELING AND PERSONNEL SERVICES
The University of Michigan
School of Education Building
Room 2108, East Univ. & South Univ.
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

*EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
University of Illinois
805 W. Pennsylvania Ave.
Urbana, Illinois 61801

EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon 97403

HANDICAPPED AND GIFTED
The Council for Expceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, Virginia 22091

HIGHER EDUCATION
George Washington University
1 Supong Circle, Suite 630
Washington, D. C. 20036

INFORMATION RESOURCES
School of Education, SCRDT
Stanford University
Stanford, California 94305

JUNIOR COLLEGE
University of California 96 Powell L
96 Powell Library
Los Angeles, California 90024

LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS
Modern Language Assoc. of America
62 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10011

READING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLLS
1111 Kenyon Road
Urbana, Illinois 61801

RURAL EDUCATIONA AND SMALL SCHOOLS
New Mexico State University, Box 3AP
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88003

SCIENCE, MATHEMATICS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION
Ohio State University
1800 Cannon Drive
400 Lincoln Tower
Columbus, Ohio 43221

SOCIAL STUDIES/SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION
855 Broadway
Boulder, Colorado 80302

TEACHER EDUCATION
1 Dupont Circle N.W., Suite 616
Washington, D. C. 20036

TEST, MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION
Educational Testing Service
Princeton, New Jersey 08540

URBAN EDUCATION
Teachers College, Box 40
Columbia University
New York, New York 10027

*ERIC/ECE is responsible for research documents on the physiological, psychological, and cultural development of children from birth through age eight, with major focus on educational theory, research and practice related to the development of young children.